



YACHTSPERSON OF THE YEAR

## GARY FERACOTA

Gary Feracota grew up in the Chicago area. He is an Eagle Scout and was educated at Northern Illinois where he earned a degree in Physics, and at the University of Chicago, where he was awarded a MBA. He spent many years in management consulting and the software industry. Sailing has become his passion and a vocation of sorts.

In 1998, Gary helped his wife Patti found Pinnacle Yachts, a fractional leasing program for sail and power, which makes on-the-water experiences available to many people with financial and logistical. Pinnacle has been wildly popular since its inception and now has boats in many harbors in Chicago, Miami, and Annapolis. In 2014, Pinnacle had 420 members with an average age of 50. They own 30 boats in Chicago, and have delivered more than 50,000 member uses.

While Gary continues to work with Pinnacle Yachts, he spends much of his time with the Pinnacle Foundation, a 501(c)3 charity that supports the arts, education and community service. Underwritten by Pinnacle Yachts, the Foundation offers unique on-the-water experiences as a means to raise funds for the organizations it supports. Gary says of the Foundation, "We want to have impact on small organizations that can make big changes in the lives of children. We started with a school in Cambodia that teaches English to children, enabling them as young adults to work in the large tourist industry in the country." The Foundation has gone on to fund other diverse organizations that are not big enough to command large charitable donations.

This year the Chicago Regatta, a multi-event fund raiser, donated to Bear Necessities Pediatric Cancer Foundation. Gary says that the Foundation likes to focus on different worthy organizations each year to increase impact. While the race had to be called this year due to weather, a new aspect of the Regatta was able to take place. It was a program contest aboard M32 class carbon-fiber catamarans on a five city tour, conducted in conjunction with the Chicago Match Race Center. The Chicago Regatta Dine and Dance held at the Chicago Yacht Club was also successful, and while all numbers are not yet in, it is apparent that significantly more money was raised this year.

### *Congratulations Gary Feracota,*

*CYA Yachtsperson of the Year.*

Some of the on-the-water experiences that help raise funds for the Foundation are aboard Ocean, an Andrews 77 race boat that Gary likes to think of as Chicago's flagship. Ocean is used to raise funds for the charity by selling time aboard for various activities like the Air and Water Show. She is also participating in Louie's Last Regatta in Milwaukee where the crew will race in superhero costumes to raise money for the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. Ocean is the leader of the 9/11 Tribute on Lake Michigan, and all proceeds from passengers aboard for this event go to the Foundation.

Gary Feracota also donates his time and talents to sit on the Chicago Harbor Safety Committee where he represents charter

businesses. The Committee is sanctioned by the US Coast Guard and is the only organization representing all of the commercial and recreational groups on the lake and in the river. It serves as a link between marine stakeholders who have mutual interests in the use of our navigable waterways. Its purpose is to identify major waterway safety hazards, estimate risk levels, evaluate potential mitigation measures, and set the stage for implementation of selected measures to further reduce risks in the Port of Chicago.

Gary is passionate about sailing. In addition to taking Ocean across 2,500 miles of Lake Michigan in a given year, Gary has competed in the Caribbean 600 aboard a Volvo 70 and in the Fastnet, the infamous 600 mile race around England and Ireland. He also competes in the Chicago to Mackinac Race and many others in this region. Gary is an active member of the Chicago Yacht Club.

The Feracota family is strong in its commitment to each other. Gary credits his wife Patti with a steady personality and a love of fun. Their oldest daughter, Gina just graduated from Berkeley in Public Health. Julie is studying dance and accounting at the University of Iowa. Christopher is in eighth grade.

When asked about his vision for sailors and boaters, Gary is vocal in his belief that we should all be doing more as a unified group: "We need to take our place to actively support those less fortunate, both physically and philanthropically."